



Escaping



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Chapter 1 by Haitiana Angerville

Staring in the eyes of the priest, Malachi realized that three letter words were simple enough to process, but "God" wasn't one of them. His mother had demonstrated that you could open God's ears by uniting your palms and extending your fingers upwards to heaven and bowing your head. Every year for sixteen years, his ceiling was the face of God. Every night, he prayed, believing that God would answer and act through marvelous miracles. So when he had whispered to God if his family could've eaten more than one meal a day, God had fed his mother with unemployment. Or when he had gestured to heaven so that his father could sober up, God pumped intoxicating rage through his father's veins to bruise his mother's flesh. Or when he had bowed his head so that the doctors could cure his mother's breast cancer, God poisoned his mother with the elixir of death. Or when he prayed that his father would love him, God had married his father to alcohol and paid for their everlasting honeymoon.

Sixteen years of praying for assistance from God's hand had cursed him with two subsequent years of homelessness and neglect. God had become the hunger pangs plaguing his stomach; the coward who robbed him of the little change he begged for during the day; and the paralyzing frostbite from the incisors of winter storms.

These grudges were the thoughts that coursed through and seized Malachi's mind as he was sitting in a small room within a church facing the epitome of religion. His thoughts were interrupted by the sounding of sirens outside racing past until they became distant again.

The priest commenced with, "Confess your sins so that the Almighty God of mercy and love will

forgive you, and you can be cleansed once again as the sinner you are. He was only adhering to the protocol. As he could never fathom the sins that Malachi had committed, he forced himself to appear as unemotional as possible.

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Malachi narrowed his eyes upon hearing the words that spilled from the priest's mouth, which had probably brainwashed so many other victims. He eyed over the rosary that rested

around the priest's neck and looked over his attire of a black robe with a white collar. There was a wave of familiarity that washed over Malachi when he examined the priest's face, but he ignored his hunch.

He scoffed and replied, "Well, you are definitely right about the sinner part."

"Fret not, for your Almighty Father is all merciful and forgiving. Only be willing to confess and salvation is yours," the priest reminded Malachi.

A sigh escaped Malachi's breath, and he exposed the pistol concealed in his baggy hoodie's pocket, nonchalantly laying it down flat on his palms in front of his chest. The priest widened his eyes upon beholding the tangibility of the gun. He tightened his folded hands, whitening his knuckles.

Malachi chuckled with sadistic pleasure at the priest's countenance and reassured him, "Don't worry, it's not loaded... anymore anyway." He rested the pistol on the floor by his chair. Steepling his fingers, he waited for the priest to respond with words.

Sensing that the priest would remain dumbfounded, Malachi proceeded, "Long story short, on a fateful night just two days ago, I killed a man and a woman."

"Why did you take the lives of these people? What did they ever do to you, my son?"

As a knee-jerk reaction, Malachi pointed his index finger at the priest and exclaimed, "Take that back! I am not your son because you are not my father!"

Malachi's chest heaved in and out from his outburst, but he eventually calmed himself down. He never intended to turn this into a therapy session, but the term "son" was a term of endearment that he had longed to hear in his father's voice. Given that a priest was someone who embodied everything he rejected, he was disgusted by such a blatant expression of both possession and superiority. He soon composed himself and lowered his arm to his lap. Having calmed himself down, furrowing his eyebrows and squinting his eyes, he tried to recollect how he recognized

the priest.

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The priest was surprised by Malachi's outburst, but he had grown immunity over the years for tolerating such behavior. He relaxed his tense muscles and persisted with an indifferent mien.

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The priest mesmerized Malachi with steadfast eye contact and revealed, "They died just two days ago. Turns out they were murdered while being held hostage during a bank robbery."

Malachi shuddered from his limbs to his soul as the passing wave of familiarity returned as a tormenting tsunami. The priest's eyes transformed into the lifeless woman and man floating in pools of blood. Guilt seeped from his perspiring palms and pores. Fear pricked Malachi's eyes with tears. He was weighing which was worse: imprisonment for homicide or confessing to the flesh and blood whose parents' blood he'd spilled.

"My son, as the Lord declares through James in chapter eight verse 32: 'The truth shall set you free'. And as you have voiced your crimes to the Almighty God, so as He has forgiven you. So as I have forgiven you. So as you should forgive yourself," the priest urged.

"Malachi! Malachi!" the sirens seemed to holler.

Malachi hastily retrieved the gun set on the floor and pressed it against his own temple. The priest still remained calm to avoid provoking further panic, though he was carefully watching Malachi's finger wrapped around the trigger.

"No! No! There is no God! There is no God! I could do this right now and it wouldn't matter. There is nothing in this world for me and there will never be anything else after this life. I could end this right here, right now."

"It doesn't have to be this way. Whatever you fear, frighten with your courage. Wherever you feel lost or abandoned, adopt faith and hope. Whoever has trespassed against you, forgive them, my son," the priest pleaded.

The priest outstretched his hand, motioning for Malachi to hand over the gun. Malachi resisted, desiring with every ounce of his will to defy the priest. He could've just ended it right then and there. All it took was one movement, one push of his finger. The cool touch of death and everlasting rest comforted him as he pressed the pistol into his temple. A box six feet deep

under the ground or six feet wide above ground. Malachi was forced to choose.

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"So as you should forgive yourself," the priest said. He raised his eyebrows and wiggled his fingers reminding Malachi of his parents.

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Malachi slowly lowered the gun as a tear dripped down his chin. He rested the gun into the priest's possession and surrendered, admitting, "I'm sorry. I'm so sorry."

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